
Regional Council Activity Report

March 26, 2003



Executive Director's Report

Our legislative efforts continued this month, as we made progress on issues relating to House Bill 2292 dealing with regional transportation planning. To date, the bill has passed the House and is now being heard in the Senate. The bill passed the Senate Natural Resources and Transportation Committee on March 11, 2003. At that time, MAG took a neutral position on the bill due to unresolved technical and timing issues. The bill was heard again on March 31 by the Senate Finance Committee, with a major amendment supported by MAG in which all of MAG's concerns were addressed, with one exception. The original bill specified that the election would be held in 2004, which MAG supports. However, during the Finance Committee hearing, another amendment was added prescribing a November 2004 election date, which we do not support.

This is of concern to MAG for a number of reasons. The November 2004 General Election will be crowded with other referendums and initiatives. The extension of the one-half cent sales tax deserves to be clearly understood and should not be hidden in the General Election. In a May election, the transportation initiative would not have to compete with other campaigns for voter attention, and would cost less for those sponsoring the campaign. But perhaps more importantly, waiting for a November election could delay the implementation of large-scale transportation projects, which need a substantial lead time for environmental assessment, right-of-way purchase, planning and design before they can be built.

MAG is proceeding as rapidly as it can to develop the Regional Transportation Plan to be ready for a May 13, 2004 election. This would provide approximately 19 months to have projects ready for implementation. A November 2004 or later election would jeopardize our ability to continue a steady stream of projects and would negatively affect Arizona's economy.

It is our expectation to present a plan to the Legislature in January 2004. We have coordinated with the Maricopa County Elections Department and a May 18, 2004 election date is achievable if all parties are committed to having the election.

HB 2292 is the result of a collaboration among cities, towns, Maricopa County and the business coalition. We remain grateful to the Transportation Policy Committee, the Greater Phoenix Business Coalition, House Transportation Committee Chair Gary Pierce, and staff for the work done to date on this bill. All of these individuals are focused on a successful election to extend the one-half cent sales tax for transportation, to boost our economy and improve our quality of life.



Regional Council Meeting Report for March 26, 2003

Outreach Expands to Member Agencies

To ensure that community issues, concerns and interests are being addressed in the development of the new Regional Transportation Plan, the Transportation Policy Committee has developed a Member Agency Outreach Plan. The request for the development of such a plan came from Transportation Policy Committee member Pat Dennis and Management Committee Chair Terry Ellis. The plan seeks to identify the best methods for communicating with member agencies, in order to provide information about the process and plan development. Member agencies can then use the information within their communities to encourage community input in and support for the Regional Transportation Plan. Among the materials that can be provided to member agencies upon request are newsletter articles and inserts, fact sheets, presentation materials, speakers, an informational video (currently in development), and surveys. Information is also being provided through the Let's Keep Moving Web site at www.letskeepmoving.com, and links to the site are available to member agencies.

For more information, please contact Kelly Taft, MAG Communications Manager at (602) 254-6300.

Community Emergency Notification System Underway

Development has begun for a Community Emergency Notification System that will rapidly notify residents of an emergency in their neighborhood. The system will function as a "reverse 911," allowing emergency personnel to quickly contact those living near the scene of an emergency of steps they can take to reduce or eliminate risks associated with the incident. Mesa Fire Chief Harry Beck, chair of the MAG 911 Oversight Team, provided a report to the Regional Council on the development of the system.

The system is being developed by MAG through a \$2.5 million contract award given by the Department of Environmental Quality to MAG and Qwest Communications. Chief Beck reported that the oversight team is currently focusing on preparing the database, training managers of Public Safety Answering Points, developing a public awareness campaign, defining an activation policy, examining liability issues, and pursuing continued funding to maintain the system. A stakeholders group is being formed to address policy issues and to oversee the system's implementation.

For more information, please contact Valerie Day, MAG Executive Assistant, (602) 254-6300.

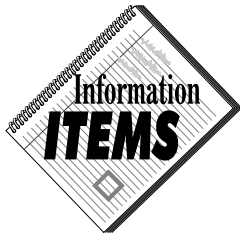
Update on Air Quality Lawsuit

The MAG Regional Council received an update on a lawsuit filed by the Arizona Center for Law in the Public Interest. The Center filed the lawsuit in July 2002, challenging the Environmental Protection Agency's approval of the MAG 1999 Serious Area Particulate Plan for PM-10. Several briefs have been filed in the case, including responses from the EPA and American Trucking Associations, Inc., defending the MAG Particulate Plan, and a second brief filed by the Center on January 17, 2003. The Center continues to argue that EPA's interpretation of Best Available Control Measures and Most Stringent Measures is contrary to the intent of the Clean Air Act and EPA guidance. In its most recent brief, the Center also claims EPA abused its discretion in granting an extension of the attainment date, and charges that the State of Arizona has repeatedly and historically resisted complying with the requirements of the Clean Air Act.

In its brief, the EPA maintains that the plan does have the Best Available Control Measures and most stringent measures in place, and maintains that the plan meets federal requirements without CARB diesel. The EPA also cites the State's arguments that requiring more than one best management practice for each of the three agriculture categories cannot be technologically justified and could cause an unnecessary economic burden.

The American Trucking Associations' brief also maintains that the plan properly excludes CARB diesel as a Most Stringent Measure, because cost renders it infeasible; expected PM-10 reductions would not happen since refueling would likely occur outside the nonattainment area; this area may not be able to receive an adequate supply of CARB diesel fuel to meet requirements; and the measure would have a detrimental impact on interstate and local trucking companies.

The Regional Council is carefully watching the suit, because if EPA's approval of the plan is vacated, federal transportation funds could be lost and major transportation projects could be stopped. A court decision is possible in July. **For more information, please contact Lindy Bauer, MAG Environmental Manager, (602) 254-6300.**



Information Items

Mid-Phase Input Opportunity Report Available

As part of its adopted public involvement process, MAG conducts four phases of public involvement to elicit input on regional transportation plans. The phases include the early phase, mid-phase, final phase and continuous involvement. The mid-phase was held from the end of January 2003 through March 6, 2003. MAG cosponsored a number of events during this phase, including a freeway opening, a "MAG at the Mall" event, a joint Agency Open House and Public Hearing, small group presentations, Black History Month events, and participation in several Hispanic Community events, including the Latino Institute, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and the 8th Annual Seminar in Spanish and Business Expo. Many of the events were held in cooperation with the Arizona Department of Transportation, Valley Metro and Valley Metro Rail. The FY 2003 Mid-Phase Input Opportunity Report contains a summary of input received during these events, as well as comments received at Management Committee and Regional Council meetings. The report also includes staff responses to citizen comments and questions.

The FY 2003 MAG Mid-Phase Opportunity Report is available on the MAG Web site, www.mag.maricopa.gov.

For more information, contact Jason Stephens, MAG Public Involvement Planner, (602)-254-6300.



Upcoming Events

MAG to Host Booth at "Sunday on Central"

The Maricopa Association of Governments and the Arizona Department of Transportation will host a booth at "Sunday on Central" on April 13, 2003, held each spring by the city of Phoenix. During the event, Central Avenue is closed between Osborn and Virginia to allow thousands of participants to walk along Central and enjoy hundreds of booths and displays. The MAG/ADOT booth will feature informational materials about transportation plans in the region,

as well as a survey to measure residents' transportation priorities. To entice parents to take the survey, the booth will also include the kid-popular MAG Wheel-of-Fortune Trivia Game, which provides fun and informational giveaways to winners.

For more information, contact Jason Stephens, MAG Public Involvement Planner, (602)-254-6300.

Next Regional Council Meeting

The next Regional Council meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 23, 2003 at 5:00 p.m. at the MAG offices, 302 N. 1st Avenue, Suite 200, Phoenix. Agenda items are expected to include acceptance of the FY 2002-2003 Annual Transit Performance Report; a proposal to accelerate certain freeway segments for rubberized asphalt; requested changes to the MAG Regional Freeway Program; an update on the MAG High Capacity Transit Study; and a Regional Transportation Plan update. Additional agenda items are pending.

For more information contact Dennis Smith, MAG Executive Director, (602) 254-6300.